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The situation in the Middle East

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Sixty-third year

Letter dated 12 May 2008 from the Permanent Representatives of Iraq and Kuwait to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On the occasion of the third expanded meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the countries neighbouring Iraq, held in Kuwait on 22 April 2008, and also attended by Egypt, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Sweden, the permanent members of the Security Council, the G-8 countries, the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the Secretariat of the Arab States, the Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union, and upon instructions from the Governments of the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq, we request circulation of the final communiqué issued by the meeting, together with the recommendations of the three working groups stemming from the meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the countries neighbouring Iraq and a document on the concept and functions of the Ad Hoc Support Mechanism for the meetings of the neighbouring countries (see annex).

We request that you kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 17, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdullah **Al-Murad**
Permanent Representative of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Hamid **Al Bayati**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 12 May 2008 from the Permanent Representatives of Iraq and Kuwait to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Final communiqué of the Expanded Ministerial Conference of the Countries Neighbouring Iraq, Egypt and Bahrain, the permanent members of the Security Council and the Group of Eight

Kuwait, 22 April 2008

Upon the invitation of the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq, the Foreign Ministers of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq, Egypt, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, and the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council and the G8 held a meeting in Kuwait on the 22nd of April, 2008. The United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union also took part in the meeting. The meeting was designed to contribute concretely to the Iraqi government's efforts to restore permanent peace, stability, and prosperity through invigoration of the existing national reconciliation dialogue, in combating terrorism, strengthening the rule of law and widening participation in the political process. The meeting aimed to provide ongoing strong and effective support to both the government and people of Iraq. The meeting also served the purpose of the participant countries to reiterate their commitment to Iraq's territorial integrity, unity, full sovereignty and independence, and non-interference in its internal affairs. The meeting affirmed its continuous implementation of the obligation that it has committed to undertake in this regard.

Their Highnesses and Excellencies who participated in the meeting were :

Kingdom of Bahrain	*Minister of Foreign Affairs,* *H.E. Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al Khalifa*
Canada	*Parliamentary Secretary Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs* *H.E. Deepak Obhrai*
People's Republic of China	*Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs,* *H.E. Zhai Jun*
Arab Republic of Egypt	*Foreign Minister Assistant of Arabian Affairs* *H.E. Mohammed Bader Alden Zaied -*
French Republic	*Minister of Foreign Affairs,* *H.E. Bernard Kouchner*
Federal Republic of Germany	*Minister of State for the German Federal Foreign Affairs ,* *H.E. Boom Garden George*
Islamic Republic of Iran	*Minister of Foreign Affairs,* *H.E. Manoushaher Muttaki*
Iraq Republic	*Prime Minister ,* *H.E. Nouri Al Maliki*

Republic of Italy	*Deputy Foreign Minister,* *H.E. Ogo Intini*
Japan	*Senior Vice – Minister for Foreign Affairs ,* *H.E. Itsunori Onodera*
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan	*Minister of Foreign Affairs,* *H.E. Salah Alden Al Bashir*
State of Kuwait	*Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs* *H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Al Salem Al Sabah*
Sultanate of Oman	*General Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs,* *H.E. Bader Bin Hamoud Al Bousaeedi*
Russian Federation	*Minister of Foreign Affairs,* *H.E. Sergy Lavrov*
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	*Minister of Foreign Affairs ,* *H.R.H. Prince Saud Al Faisal*
Syrian Arab Republic	*Minister of Foreign Affairs,* *H.E. Walid Al Muallem*
Republic of Turkey	*Minister of Foreign Affairs,* *H.E. Ali Babajan*
United Arab Emirates	*Minister of Foreign Affairs* *H.E. Shaikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahayan*
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	*Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs* *H.E. David Miliband*

United States of America	*Secretary of State,* *H.E. Condoleezza Rice*
United Nations	*Under Secretary General for Political Affairs,* *H.E. Ben Lynn Pascoe*
European Union Presidency (Republic of Slovenia)	*Minister of the Republic of Slovenia,* *H.E. Dimitrij Rupel*
Secretariat of the Council of the European Union	*Member of Council of the European Council of the European Union ,* *H.E. Ann Sophie Kisling*
European Union Commission	*H.E. Hugues Mingarelli*
League of Arab States	*Secretary General,* *H.E. Amr Moussa*
Organization of the Islamic Conference	*Secretary General,* *H.E. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu*
Gulf Cooperation Council	*Secretary General,* *H.E. Abdulrahman Bin Hamad Al Attiyah*

The participants agreed to,

1. Reaffirm the respect of national unity, independence, full sovereignty, territorial integrity, Arab and Islamic Identity of Iraq; commit to the preservation of Iraq's internationally recognized borders, and pledge to adhere to a comprehensive and consistent commitment to the principle of non-interference in Iraq's internal affairs; stressing the right of the Iraqi people to freely determine their political system and political future and control their natural and financial resources,

2. Affirm the full support for Iraq and its people and the efforts of the constitutionally elected Iraqi government and Council of Representatives; to achieve the goals of the Iraqi people in a speedy and effective manner for a free, prosperous, stable, united, democratic and federal Iraq that ensures the fundamental and equal rights of the Iraqi people to peacefully participate in the ongoing political process,

3. Reconfirm the commitment of the International Community and Iraq's neighbors to promote peace, stability, and security in Iraq which shall reflect positively on the security and stability of the region and the interests of its people and the international community as a whole,

4. Welcome the establishment of the Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism formed by the Iraqi government within the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs as adopted in the Expanded Iraq Neighbours Ministerial Conference held in Istanbul on November 3, 2007; also approve the Terms of Reference of the Ad Hoc Support Mechanism, and call upon all concerned countries and organizations to cooperate with its work,

5. The conference reviewed and adopted the recommendations of the three working groups (the Energy Working Group, the Refugee Working Group, and the Security Cooperation and Coordination Working Group) as attached to this final communiqué; affirmed the importance of their implementation by all concerned states; and looked forward to the three committees convening their next sessions - on security in Damascus, energy in Istanbul, and displaced persons in Amman - as soon as possible,

6. Support the efforts of the Iraqi Government in broadening the political process, strengthening the elected institutions, reinforcing political dialogue and national reconciliation, assisting vulnerable groups including the internally and externally displaced persons, and promoting the protection of human right and judicial and legal reform,

7. Encourage all Iraqis to engage in comprehensive political dialogue and national reconciliation for the sake of Iraq's stability, unity, and its sustainable development,

8. Stress the importance to achieve Iraqi national reconciliation and accord, praising the role of the Iraqi government in this regard, and calling on the League of Arab States to continue its efforts in coordination and cooperation with the Iraqi government and concerned parties,

9. Applaud the continuous effort by the Iraqi government to confront those who foment violence throughout Iraq; commend the role of the Iraqi armed and security forces in confronting and deterring the recent threats posed by armed groups; and welcome the Government's commitment to disarm and dismantle all militias and extra-governmental armed groups, enforcing the rule of law, and ensuring the State's monopoly on armed forces,

10. Stress the principle of the Iraqi national identity and invite all components of the Iraqi people to work for the enhancement of the National Unity, regardless of their political trends and ethnic and sectarian affiliations; and seek to employ the historical multi-cultural heritage as a mean of unification not division,

11. Call upon international and regional concerned organizations (UNESCO, ALECSO, ISESCO, and IRCICA) to contribute to the preservation and revitalization of the historical heritage of Iraq, that has been destroyed or damaged due to the war; and welcome active support from the neighbours and international community for their effort, and to help the Iraqi people to retrieve their stolen heritage,

12. Acknowledge the determined endeavors of the Syrian, Jordanian, and Egyptian governments in generously hosting Iraqis; recognize the obligations of Iraq and the international community in supporting host countries to address the resulting burdens on their services, infrastructure, and resources and to create conditions conducive to a voluntary, safe, and dignified return,

13. Acknowledge the importance of the International Compact with Iraq for the political reconciliation and reconstruction of this country, and its commitment to assist the government of Iraq through political and economic reform, capacity building and providing conditions for sustainable development; in this context, recognize the role and potential of neighbouring countries in the construction of Iraq, welcome the decision of the Paris Club, and invite all the creditors to Iraq to follow its example, in a way that contributes in reducing Iraqi debts; welcome the willingness of the government of Sweden to host the next session of the International Compact with Iraq; and welcome the contribution of Iraq's neighbours and regional states in the development of economic progress in Iraq,

14. Affirm the efforts of the United Nations and commend UNAMI's important role in providing support, consultation, assistance and coordination with the Iraqi government according to the Security Council Resolution "1770" of (2007), and other relevant Security Council resolutions; welcome the active assistance of UNAMI to the establishment of the Ad-Hoc support mechanism and to its activities to support and develop regional dialogue on Iraq,

15. Encourage and urge all states, in particular the neighbours of Iraq, to open or reopen their diplomatic missions, and enhance those existing by raising the level of representation, and expedite the sending of their Ambassadors to Iraq, which will contribute in the improvement and development of bilateral relations; welcome the opening of the Office of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Baghdad as an encouraging development that will enable the Organization to follow up its initiatives more actively, including its Mecca Declaration initiative; welcome states who decided to re-open their embassies in Baghdad; and urge the government of Iraq to expedite its appointment of Ambassadors to neighbouring countries and others.

16. Condemn the aggression and war crimes of the former regime of Iraq against peoples of Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran and the State of Kuwait; condemn the killing of Kuwaiti war-prisoners and nationals of other countries at the hands of the former regime in Iraq, and the former Iraqi regime's coverage of these crimes for over ten years, which is considered a violation of international humanitarian law; and welcome the steps being taken by Iraq to take the perpetrators of these crimes to courts, and also welcome the appointment of Ambassador Gennady Tarasov as UN High-Level coordinator and commend the efforts of his predecessor , the late Ambassador Yuli Voronstov and his achievements during his work in this humanitarian issue; invite all concerned parties to

continue their cooperation with the International Red Cross Committee to uncover the fate of the rest of the missing Kuwaiti citizens and others,

17. Condemn all acts of terrorism in all its forms in Iraq, call for the immediate cessation of all such acts, support the Iraqi Government's increasing efforts in combating terrorism including all efforts to prevent Iraqi territory from being used as a base for terrorism against neighbouring countries and vice versa; and takes note of the bilateral arrangements concluded between Iraq and neighbouring countries regarding the fight against terrorism, in this regard, support Iraqi government efforts to strengthen the capabilities of its armed and security forces to assume full security responsibility in the country,

18. Reaffirm the obligations of all states, in accordance with international law, relevant international agreements, UN Security Council Resolutions 1546 (2004) and 1618 (2005), and other relevant Security Council resolutions, to combat terrorist activities and prevent the use by terrorists of their territory for supplying, organizing and launching terrorist operations, and help Iraq to expel the terrorist organizations out of its territories,

19. Support the joint efforts of Iraq and its neighbouring countries to prevent the transit of terrorists and illegal arms to and from Iraq; re-emphasize the importance of strengthening cooperation between Iraq and its neighbouring countries to control their common borders and prevent all kinds of illicit trafficking, including financial and logistical support for terrorists and terrorist organizations; and refuse instigation of violence and terror,

20. Reconfirm the decisions of the Neighbouring Countries Interior Ministerial Meetings and welcome the outcome of the last meeting

which took place in Kuwait on October 23, 2007, and call for the cooperation with its secretariat based in Iraq,

21. Welcome the convening of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference which took place in the city of Irbil in Iraq on 11 March, 2008.

The participants expressed their appreciation to the State of Kuwait for hosting the conference, and expressed their desire and hope to hold the Fourth Expanded Ministerial Meeting in Baghdad.

Summary of the works and recommendations of the three Working Groups (Energy, Refugees and Security)

According to the recommendations of the Expanded Iraq's Neighboring States Foreign Ministers Conference held in Istanbul during 2-3/11/2007 in which the tasks of the three Working Groups were reaffirmed. These Working Groups held their second meetings as follows:

Energy Working Group

This Working Group held its meeting in Istanbul during 2-3/3/2008 with the participation of the representatives of: Iraq, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, League of Arab States, and Organization of Islamic Conference and the United Nations. The delegates held bi-lateral meetings with Iraqi delegation concerning the issues relating to the energy sector. The followings are the outcome of this meeting;

- Recognizing the urgency of the need of assistance to Iraq in the field of energy, especially in the course of 2008, and underlining the necessity of taking concrete action in this field in order to build upon the recent improvements in the security situation which allowed the government of Iraq to increasingly put into use the funds allocated for investments during this year.
- Exerting every effort for expediting the implementation of existing agreements between Iraq and the other parties concerning energy cooperation.
- Reaffirming that the Energy Working Group Meetings should constitute a continuous process and that further meetings will be useful and necessary.
- Underlining the importance of following up the proposals and recommendations agreed upon during the bi-lateral meetings, and deciding to review the achievement in these issues during the coming Energy Working Group Meeting, referring to the Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism in this regard.

Refugees Working Group

This Working Group held its meeting in Amman on 18/3/2008 with the participation of the representatives of Iraq, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, League of Arab States, and Organization of Islamic Conference, the five Permanent Members of the Security Council, the G8, the European Commission, the United Nations and the

Movement of the Red Cross and Crescent. The followings are the outcome of the meeting:

- Reaffirming that a genuine and effective solution to the problems of the Iraqis who are residing at the hosting countries, is the return to their places by providing them with suitable environment, and through a political process aiming at a comprehensive and national reconciliation.
- Supporting the efforts of the government of Iraq in improving the humanitarian, economic and security conditions, which will expedite the return of the refugees to their places.
- Welcoming the measures taken by the hosting countries, especially in the field of residence, health care and education.
- The importance of ensuring the financial assistance to the hosting countries in order to alleviate the burden and to build their infrastructure and services which have been negatively affected by the rapid increasing of Iraqis on their territories. Calling upon the international organizations to bear responsibility in this matter.

Security Cooperation and Coordination Working Group

The Security Cooperation and Coordination Committee of Iraq's Neighboring Countries met in Damascus on 13 and 14 April 2008 with the participation of representative of Iraq's neighbors, Egypt, Bahrain, Arab League, and The Organization of Islamic Conference the five Permanent Nations at UN Security Council, the (G8), The United Nations, and The European Union. The followings are the Recommendations of the meeting:

- Praising the positive cooperation between Iraq and the neighboring countries in the field of fighting terrorism and border controlling, and the efforts exerted by the Iraqi Government in this field, leading to improvement in the security situation in Iraq. The continuation of this requires more coordinated efforts and taking practical steps to fight all forms of terrorism and drying up its various resources of financing, and conformation that controlling the borders is a shared responsibility between Iraq and The neighboring countries.
- Supporting efforts of the Iraqi government to end armed appearances, collecting illegal weapons, dismantling of the militias and calling all countries to commit to prevent the entry of weapons into and from Iraq.
- Stresaing importance of boosting the cooperation on the bilateral and regional levels for the fighting of organized crime activities and drugs.

- Necessity of activating channels of data exchange on the security issues inter-alia, the suspected elements through the channels and mechanism agreed upon, particularly in the framework of meetings Ministers of Interior of Iraq's neighboring countries in a way that guarantees non-occurrence of any threads Iraq or any neighboring country.
- Calling on the countries which haven't yet ratified the security Cooperation Protocol signed in September 2006 in Jeddah to sign it as soon as possible, and stressing the importance of the bilateral security committees formed between Iraq and the neighboring countries, urging the neighboring countries which haven't signed yet on the bilateral Memorandums Of Understanding with Iraq in the security field to take the needed procedures towards signing these Memorandums as soon as possible.
- Calling on the counters and parties concerned to adopt the international criteria in fighting terrorism when considering granting the status of refugee as to make sure of the legal situation of those applying for it.
- Stressing on the necessity of taking measures that guarantee not using the territories of Iraq or any territory of neighboring countries for training or organizing terrorist actions committed within Iraq or against other countries or their citizens and enhancing cooperation between Iraq and neighboring countries to eliminate any such threat through dialogue and diplomatic channels.
- Stressing on prevention of provoking violence or blaspheming the others (Takfir) in whatever forms, and adopting recommendation not to deal with any Iraqi elements that call for terrorism, inciting sectarian sedition or calling for undermining the political process in Iraq.
- Stressing the importance of the recommendations issued by the Committee of Border Experts which held its meeting in Kuwait 22-23 October 2007 in implementation of the decision of the Security Cooperation and the Coordinating Committee in its 1st meeting, with emphasis on necessity on carrying out these recommendations which tackled the process of border control, taking quick procedures to name liaison officers if not yet done so, and defining means of communications to activate their roles, exchange of information, and proposal to hold another meeting of the Committee on the margin of the next fifth meeting of the Ministers of Interior of Iraq's neighboring countries this year 2008 in Amman, to fellow up the implantation of recommendations endorsed by 1st meeting.
- Calling on all neighboring countries to cooperate with the Baghdad-based Secretariat of Ministers of Interior of Iraq's neighboring countries

presenting the bi-annual reports to fellow up the implemented recommendations and decisions.

- Stressing on cooptation with the Mechanism of Support ratified in the plenary meeting of Foreign Ministers of Iraq's neighboring countries held in Istanbul in November 2007 which will be formed at the Iraqi Foreign Ministry to follow up all results of the Ministerial meetings and their sub-committees, and presenting their findings to the Ministerial meetings of the neighboring countries once the duties and rules of the procedures concerned of this mechanism have been ratified.
- Stressing on the importance of commitment to achieve Iraqi national reconciliation and accord, praising the role of the Iraqi government in this regard, and calling on the Arab League to continue its efforts in this regard in coordination and cooperation with the Iraqi government and parties concerned.

Ad-hoc Support Mechanism for Expanded Ministerial Conference of Neighboring States to Iraq

Introduction

The first expanded ministerial conference of neighboring states to Iraq held in Sharm el-sheikh, Egypt on 4 may 2007 supported the establishment of regional working groups headed by the government of Iraq in the areas of energy, security and Iraqi refugees. The meeting also called for the establishment of a "follow-up group" to regularly review progress in implementing the conclusions" reached at the conference. The initial meetings of the three working groups were held in Istanbul from 28 to 29 June 2007, Amman on 22 July 2007 and Damascus from 8 to 9 August 2007. These meetings were important practical steps in promoting regional cooperation in the areas of common interest. The outcomes also underlined the need for a proper follow-up mechanism. Ideas for such a mechanism were discussed at the Preparatory Conference in Baghdad on 9 September 2007.

Following those discussions, the Secretary- General of the United Nations proposed at the High-Level meeting on Iraq on 22 September 2007 in New York that a Support Mechanism be established to assist in the work of the expanded ministerial process and the regional working group. The expanded Neighboring Countries Ministerial Conference decided to establish An Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism within the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs to review progress in implementing the conclusions reached at the Ministerial Conferences and disseminate information in a timely manner. The Ministerial conference welcomed the UN's offer to provide resources to such a 'Support Mechanism' the terms and the mission to be agreed upon by the members of the Expanded Neighbors process.

Concept

The Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism is an integral part of the government of Iraq and actively assisted by the United Nations on technical and organizational issues. The government of Iraq has designated a senior official as Coordinator under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad. The United Nations has designated a senior official as a principle contact with the Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism as well as established a unit in UNAMI tasked with support functions.

Functions

The Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism shall be responsible for the following;

I – Assist in Preparing draft plans and schedules for future expanded ministerial conferences, as well as regional working group meetings to be considered by participants in consultation with the hosting countries.

II – Consult participants on the objectives and expected outcomes of the conferences and meetings and ensure timely distribution of all relevant documents to all participants.

III –Assist in Preparing draft programs, agendas, position papers and outcome documents in consultation and cooperation with the hosting countries. For consideration by participants.

IV – Liaise with the participants on organizational and logistic matters related to the preparation of ministerial conferences and working group meetings.

V - Assist the host countries by providing relevant information and identifying possible options for consideration by the working groups.

VI –Record decisions reached, distribute minutes of the meetings and archive key documents.

VII – Help to ensure proper follow-up by maintaining a record of all decisions reached and facilitate their implementation by contacts with relevant international and regional organizations.

United Nations Role in assisting the Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism

In accordance with paragraph 2(a) (IV) of the Security Council Resolution 1770(2007), the United Nations, shall provide the Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism with the following assistance;

I – Provide technical inputs for draft programs, agendas, position papers and outcome documents as well as policy advice.

II – Contribute to the resourcing the Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism.

III – Identify qualified technical experts to advise the Government of Iraq.

IV – Offer training on multilateral and regional diplomacy to Iraq.

V – Maintain contacts with neighboring states on organizational and logistic issues related to the work of the Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism.

VI – Assist in the following-up of the recommendations of the Working Groups and the decisions of the Ministerial conferences.